



2026 Allegany County Board of Education Candidate Questionnaire

CANDIDATE : Lori Lepley

OFFICE SOUGHT : Board of Education

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*I confirm that the responses provided here are my official positions in seeking local office and I understand that **Allegany County Education Association** reserves the right to share my responses with members and interested parties.*

CANDIDATE SIGNATURE: _____ DATE SUBMITTED: _____

Candidates: To be considered for a recommendation, you must indicate your response to each of the questions. You may use more space than is provided to elaborate on your answers and provide clarification, explanation, and other context, but please be certain to clearly indicate the questions(s) to which you refer. Please return your completed and signed questionnaire to **Allegany County Education Association**.

Education Funding and Local Budgets:

1. What are your top three budget priorities for the public school system?
 - 1) My top priority is to continue to stay in a good financial position. Many, if not most, of the other Maryland school districts are facing budget shortfalls, forcing them to make very hard decisions. It is important that we do not find ourselves in that position.
 - 2) Inflation, higher cost of living, increasing healthcare costs, etc. have taken a toll on our community. During my time on the board, making every effort to maintain take home pay has been a budget priority and it will continue to be a budget priority.
 - 3) With the increasing costs of college and the massive student loan debt that college graduates are facing, it is important to maintain and expand career center and early college opportunities for our students.
2. How you would utilize your budget authority to address shortfalls facing our schools if the state or federal government reduces their commitment(s)?

If our funding commitments are reduced, I would recommend an aggressive grant writing campaign to secure alternative funding and use attrition to reduce staffing costs. Fortunately, we are in good financial standing with our fund balance, so we shouldn't find ourselves in a position where we need to scramble if cuts happen.

3. In many schools, educators are dealing with high class sizes and caseloads. How will you help address critical concerns with educator recruitment and retention in order to ensure we can increase staffing to reduce class sizes and caseloads?

Overall, I am not aware that classroom sizes are an issue in our district. That is not to say there are no classrooms that exceed our county's guidelines. Our average teacher-to-student ratio is below the Maryland average.

We offer excellent health insurance, and the Blueprint mandated \$60,000 starting salary. That, coupled with our lower cost of living, smaller rural community, and outdoor recreation is attractive.

For example, my sister lives in Oakland, CA. Her sister-in-law is a certified teacher that was exploring a move to Oakland. Their school district's starting salary is lower than ours, although the cost of living is significantly higher.

4. Do you commit to honoring the role of your elected body in upholding the policy and funding mandates associated with the Blueprint for Maryland's Future?

☒ Yes

☐ No

Additional Comments:

Not all Blueprint mandates are funded, so the ones that do not have earmarked funds will have to be analyzed to ensure financial feasibility and the benefit of return.

5. Please discuss your philosophy related to charter schools. Do you believe they should be added in our county public school structure?

I don't believe that students' educational needs are one size fits all. Charter schools allow curricular freedom for specific/unique academic programs, which could be geared towards a certain field of study or to address specific learning needs.

I am not sure that our county has a need for charter schools. If there was a need and it could be implemented without negatively impacting the other schools, I would explore supporting it.

Public Funding for Private Schools

6. Do you support or oppose allocating public funding to non-public school students through voucher programs?

☒ Support

☐ Oppose

Additional Comments:

Again, educational needs are not one size fits all and some students have needs that are better served in non-public school settings. Fortunately, this is not an issue for our district, but some children must go to schools that are unsafe and/or underperforming because of their address. This disproportionately affects low-income families.

7. Do you support or oppose allowing non-public school students to participate in public school extracurricular activities (sports, clubs, etc.)?

☐ Support

☒ Oppose

Additional Comments:

Before being a school board member, I would have fully supported this. If the participation of the non-public school student is not a disruption, doesn't cost the school system money, and doesn't take a spot away from a public school student, I could support an exception.

Collective Bargaining

8. Do you support or oppose school employees gaining the right to strike?

☐ Support

☒ Oppose

Additional Comments:

The elected board sets policy, the superintendent manages operations, the county provides some funding, and the union negotiates labor terms. To effectively navigate this structure, a good working relationship with everyone involved is necessary.

As a board member, I help choose the superintendent, help steer the system through policy, and I hold one vote for the budget proposal.

10. How do you balance honoring ratified contracts with public employees in the county, including educators, with other priorities, especially in tight fiscal times?

Without having gone through this process, I would think that the top priority would be to honor contracts. This could be managed by trying to secure alternative funding, finding waste, consolidating and/or cutting non-essential spending, and careful analysis and discussion of all expenditures.

11. Do you support or oppose public negotiations, where members of the public and educators are able to witness collective bargaining between our school system and union negotiating teams?

_____ Support

_____ Oppose

Additional Comments:

I am neutral on this. I can see the pros and the cons of public negotiations.

12. Do you commit to meeting with union leadership to talk about the needs facing our schools (including salary and staffing levels) and the revenue or other budget actions necessary to meet those needs?

__X__ Yes

_____ No

Additional Comments:

I am available anytime to discuss issues and concerns and to brainstorm.

Racial and Social Justice:

13. To encourage critical thinking within our classrooms, we believe educators should have professional autonomy on how to implement curriculum to meet the needs of our students. Do you support or oppose this position?

☒ Support

☐ Oppose

Additional Comments:

The teacher is the professional with years of training and should not be limited to a rigid curriculum that does not allow academic freedom. I have spoken to many teachers who feel stifled for different reasons. Some feel there is no time for fun learning or projects because they have to squeeze in their requirements or the inability to share their love of literature because of a strict required reading list.

14. Do you support or oppose a curriculum that reflects the perspective and background of diverse learners? How would you respond to political pressure requesting changes to content and curriculum?

☐ Support

☐ Oppose

Additional Comments:

I am not sure that I fully understand the question. This question feels like it pertains to history, so that is how I will answer it. I believe it is important to have resources and learning materials from a variety of perspectives. There are many players and each one is going to have a unique experience and perspective.

This is a non-partisan position, and I am not obligated to answer to a political party. As long as materials are age appropriate, there shouldn't be any issues.

15. What specific policy goals and objectives will you pursue aimed at addressing racial and social justice, including support of diversity, equity, and inclusion for all students and providing equitable access, opportunities, resources, and supports?

16. Immigration enforcement is a matter of federal jurisdiction. What is your position on how local law enforcement should interact with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement? And how will you work to ensure school grounds, bus stops, and other school spaces are safe havens against immigration enforcement actions?

Local law enforcement should interact with US Immigration and Customs Enforcement as they would with any other federal law enforcement. I do not support ICE operations on or around school grounds and I don't think children should have to worry about that. If this would become an issue, I would support policy prohibiting it.

17. Stable, safe, and affordable housing is necessary for all students to be able to succeed in school and in the recruitment of educators, including education support professionals, to live in the communities they serve. How do you plan to address the housing crisis in the county?

County housing issues are outside of the prevue of an elected board of education member. However, as a real estate appraiser, I know there is an affordability issue. It is not just in this county, but nationwide. I don't think that this issue has been solved anywhere. As a board member, I could support and encourage affordable housing initiatives.

Privatization and Support for Education Support Professionals

18. Are you in favor of contracting out custodial, cafeteria, and maintenance services rather than have those services provided by Board of Education employees?

_____ Support

__X__ Oppose

Additional Comments:

Custodial, cafeteria, and maintenance workers are an integral part of the school system. It could lower costs, but I think there are more disadvantages to doing this. Most of our bus services are contracted. There seems to be consistent staffing issues, turnover, income complaints, etc.

19. Too many ESPs work second jobs and struggle to provide for their families, buy homes, save for their futures, and afford community or four-year college tuition for their children to learn a trade and plan a career. The looming threats of privatization by school districts, which would import even lower-paid workers from outside areas, risk the stability of schools and communities and further undermine the value of ESPs and their jobs.

ESPs across the state are organizing to build presence, strength, and power in a campaign focused on a bill of rights that defines the issues long nagging these dedicated employees and now threatening not only the recruitment of new employees but the retention of dedicated veteran employees. You can read about the [ESP Bill of Rights here](#).

Do you support the ESP Bill of Rights?

☒ Support

☐ Oppose

Additional Comments:

20. Please share how you would use your office to help make the ESP Bill of Rights a reality in the county.

As a board member, I have advocated for doing what we can to increase ESP salaries. After seeing an ACPs job listing for part time IAs and comparing it to a job listing for a Sheetz cashier, I expressed my concerns before our budget process began. We are constrained by funding, so we are limited in that aspect, but I will continue to advocate.

Essay Questions

A. Why are you running for this position? What personal attributes, characteristics, and experiences make you the right candidate for this position?

It takes the first term to really understand how to navigate your position. A second term is necessary to make positive contributions. My youngest child will be in second grade, so we will be in the public school system for a while. I have a vested interest in building up our school system and ensuring excellent student outcomes.

I feel like I am a good listener and a solution finder. I have built good working relationships with some teachers and staff and have advocated for them and helped some of them navigate issues.

B. What are the top three things you would like to accomplish in the next four years if you are elected to Board of Education?

- 1) I would love to be part of the process of improving the state's school calendar.
- 2) I want to support the expansion of the career center and early college opportunities.
- 3) I want support the implementation of collaborative planning time and quality professional development

Additional Information

Along with this completed questionnaire, please provide an up-to-date bio or resume as well as a current list of endorsements for this election cycle.

Bio/Resume

List of Endorsements:

I don't have any official endorsements.